



RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

One Corliss Park

Providence, RI 02908

MEETING MINUTES – General Meeting

Date: November 5, 2013

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Minutes recorded by: Nancy Sousa

Minutes approved on: 12/3/13

Interpreters: Carol Fay & Maureen McEntee

Cart: Shelley Deming

RIDE:

Attorney:

Call to Order

- a. Chairperson Marie Lynch called the meeting of the RI School for the Deaf Board of Trustees to order at 6:09 p.m. in the Cafeteria of the RI School for the Deaf.

Roll Call of Board of Trustees

- b. **In Attendance:** Travis Zellner, Amy Donnelly Roche, Jodi Merryman, Westley Resendes, Joseph Fischgrund, Lindsey Medeiros, Amanda Montgomery,
 - c. **Excused:** Heather Niedbala
- **Public Comment: None**
Chair asked interested BOT individual **Brett Hayes** to address the Board: Brett had attended RISD for 3 or 4 years; has been away from the deaf community for a long time; observing tonight to see what the Board is trying to achieve for the school; his expertise is in accounting and finance; has an MBA and works for a media company in MA; has been an auditor; lives in Providence.
 - Acceptance of Previous Meeting Minutes: **October 15, 2013 – approved by consensus (with edits)**
 - **Reports / Action Items:** (6:25 - 7:45pm)
 - Report of the Board of Trustees Chair:
 - Update on possible BOT nominees: Thanks Brett for being here tonight and notes that if the BOT knows other potential or interested individuals, please let the Chair know.
 - Westley Resendes announced that he would be leaving to take a position at the University of Michigan – which means that he be replaced as Secretary. Members and the Director thanked him for his commitment to the Board and wished him much success.

- Committees Roles/Functions:

Travis Zellner: noted that the By-Laws have very specific definitions of each role, e.g. Vice Chair, Secretary, etc. Mr. Zellner also commented on the concerns of a new member with the Mission Statement; noted that much time and money went in to vetting the community to establish the Mission Statement, Strategic Plan, Transition Plan; feels that this is not the time to change wording; marketing the school should be our first priority.

Members: noted that the school has changed a lot, but is still far under capacity; really need a marketing plan and an appropriate staff; expressed interest in having an Outreach person/committee to get the word out to the community; part of the Strategic Plan is to build awareness.

Director: as principal, curriculum developer and director – not enough time to network, which is so important to the school; have been focused on EI and developing resources with ASL; we are empowering parents and increasing our consultation work with districts who are main-streaming students.

Chair: we are asked to inform the legislature of what the school is now; we must inform and correct information; relate success stories whenever possible. Perhaps Board could collaborate with a staff committee.

Regular Committees: Policy, Personnel and Budget:

Chair: in next couple of months, will think through the training process; there is a mini-guide from the Board of Education that defines key areas for Board members; Chair has reached out to Sally Arsenault about some training for new members, but prefers to wait till all new members are secured.

- Update on renewal of legal contract with
Whelan, Kinder & Siket LLP
 Sara A. Rapport, Partner
 30 Kennedy Plaza, Suite 402
 Providence, RI 02903-231

Chair: spoke with attorney about continuing, but the offer/contract has to be better defined, esp. the hourly rate; new firm has brokered an agreement with the governor's office; will reach out to attorney again to get more information.

- Action Item:

- Election of officers; Committee(s):

Chair asked that members think about the Secretary and Vice-Chair positions as defined in the By-Laws document.

- Action Item:

- Ad Hoc Committee – Marketing/Outreach:

Director: we need to replace lost students and market ourselves professionally; people still have old ideas about us or think we are not open; the changes we have made are good, but we must dispel myths and get rid of ill feelings.

- Reports of the Director and Assistant Director of Finance:

- Updates:

Director: grades are closing; finishing 1st quarter; started a tutoring program – 4 teachers applied; they will meet with students 4 days a week after school – this is not a homework club. We have requests for outside students to do Research at the school – need a Research Policy – Jodi Merryman offered to help with that.

School Activities: Academic Bowl: 4 students will attend 1st week-end in December; changed date of Tip-off Tournament to accommodate; had meeting with parents regarding Close-Up – would like to send 4 students – two are committed and 2 more possible; thanks for donations; must fund-raise.

Crafts Fair was a huge Success; we won an Arts Grant (with Peter Geisser's help) and will work with RI School of Design. Inviting all to Thanksgiving Luncheon on 11/26 – it will be a catered turkey dinner; Friends will fund it this year. Deaf rapper, Sean Forbes, was here – kids and staff loved the show sponsored by Hamilton Relay and Steve Florio. We are focusing on implementing new curriculum; not easy for staff.

Data: handout provided: reading levels/SAT10 by grade levels – reading comprehension, language, vocabulary, math; these are base-line scores – will reassess again in May.

Members: very happy to have data well-organized and summarized; noted that the statistics are not that different from other deaf schools and asked about after-school transportation – (using our school chauffer and public busses); also noted that Andrea is still our go-to person at RIDE for the Transformation – our main focus is on student achievement with the plan; offered to donate funds for students to attend Close-up, but can look for leadership from Board for fund-raising.

- Update on Budget discussion – **Maureen Wu:**

Have not received a response from Budget Office or RIDE regarding the proposed budget; spent most of month learning UCOA – every transaction coded and submitted - state accounting system, must report quarterly. The bid for the garages was awarded to Chorico for \$369,000 – there is a 22-week lead time for materials; should see a mid-July finish. The need for a garage is supported by the five vehicles we have (most of which have been vandalized in the past); the garage will hold all vehicles and provide a workshop for maintenance. We will have a new security system for the garage with no additional costs; ten trees were vandalized last week – groups of kids come down from the hill – security guard was making his rounds around the building; also will house mowers and snow blowers – need to be out of the building with gasoline tanks.

Members: thanked Ms. Wu for her work and noted that the UCOA coding is an unbelievable task to accomplish in a short time.

- Report of the Board of Trustees Policy Committee - **Jodi Merryman:**

- Action Item: Bullying Policy - for approval – added line under “Investigations” – mindful of student's language; reflective of legal references.

Harrassment, Bullying, Teen Dating Violence and Sexual Violence Policy - Approved by consensus –

Will meet with the Director to discuss a Research Policy. The past Management Policy/Best Practices will get finished also.

- Report of the Board of Trustees By-Laws Committee - **Travis Zellner:**

Asked if there were any areas that need to be changed? We will have a work session to review and modify; please send your comments to the Director before the work session; the by-laws will

need a legal review for terminology and phrasing. In the past, we were considered an LEA – that is no longer correct.

The 3rd reading will be on the agenda for December 3rd meeting – should be complete by then.

Members: discussion following regarding the agenda and what position is responsible for the monthly meeting agenda – in the by-laws, it is the Director’s responsibility; however, with the past Director, the Chair took on the responsibility of the agenda writing. The discussion was tabled at this time for more reflection – a collaboration of the Chair and the Director would be a good alternative – under OMA laws, the Director suggests the agenda items to include; delegating the printing/posting to Executive Staff Assistant.

Chair: noted that the OMA is very precise about how we can communicate with each other; There can be no decision made before meeting takes place – public is invited to an OPEN meeting.

Please send suggestions for agenda items to Nancy Maguire Heath; on the agenda for our next meeting: approve By-Laws and Policies; update on Ad-Hoc committees.

Re a Gala Committee: extend an invitation to Friends to meet with Board– Lindsey Medeiros will be in charge of the Gala Committee; any potential nominee names should be sent to the Director or the Chair.

Adjournment: 8:11 p.m.